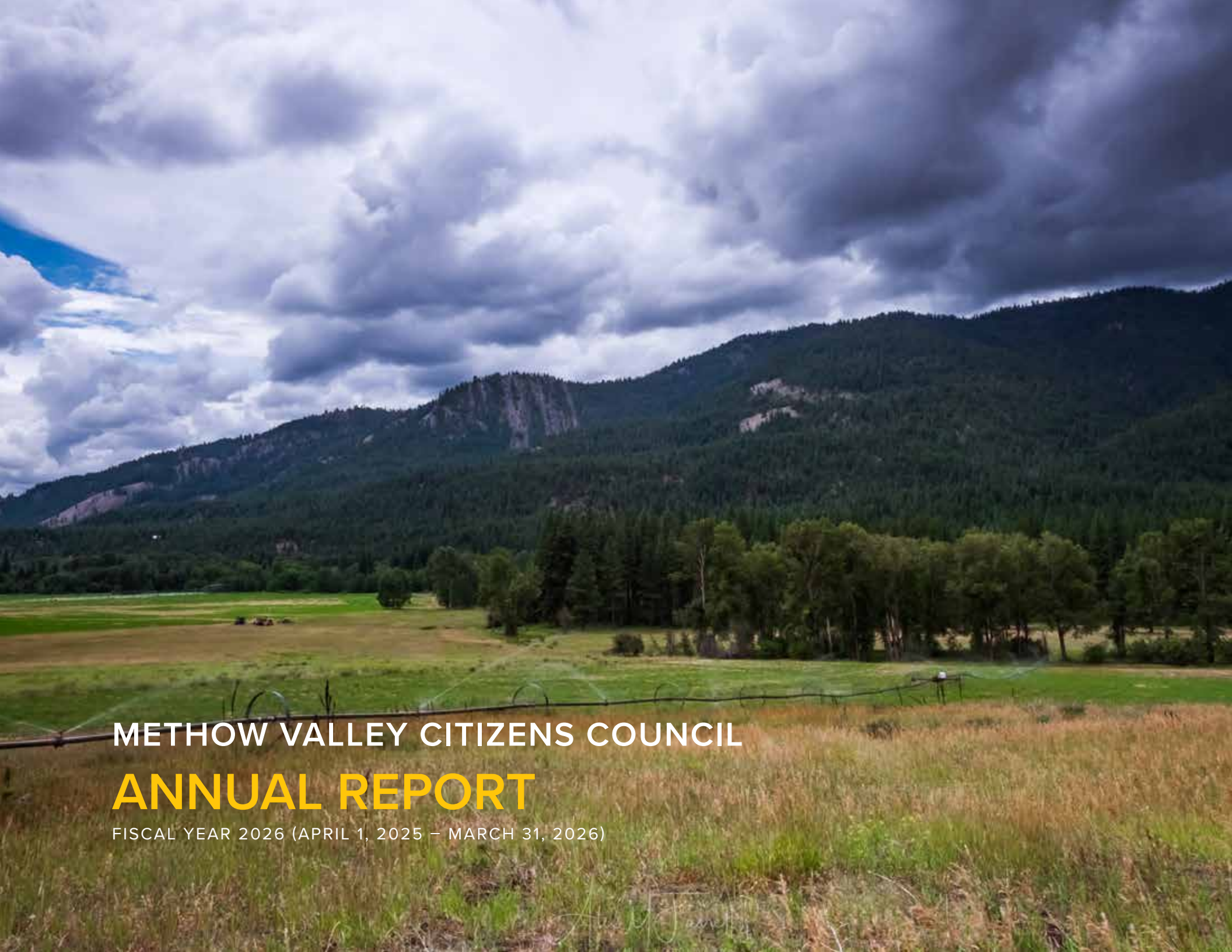




METHOW VALLEY CITIZENS COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2026 (APRIL 1, 2025 – MARCH 31, 2026)



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The mission of the Methow Valley Citizens Council (MVCC) is to raise a strong community voice for the protection of the Methow Valley's natural environment and rural character.

Established in 1976, MVCC has since garnered strong community support as advocates for progressive land use and environmental values in the Methow Valley and around Okanogan County. Today, MVCC maintains its role as a watchdog organization, while lending its expertise in distilling complex issues and convening constructive dialogue to local and regional coalition-building efforts.

MVCC is a membership-based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, EIN 91-1061350.



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In the Methow Valley, climate change means warmer winters and low summer flows. More and more it means navigating wildfire and smoke on a daily basis. Meanwhile development pressures continue to shape

difficult conversations about growth, housing, and the character of our communities. Where we may have felt sheltered before, decisions made in Olympia and Washington, D.C. increasingly reach their way into our corner of the country.

But one thing that's held steady for decades is that people in the Methow are paying attention – and they're showing up.

As I prepared to join MVCC as your Executive Director in April, the passion of this community stood out. Though our work can be challenging (to say the least), we're surrounded by people who care deeply enough to stand alongside one another and turn collective care into action. This is what gives us the strength, courage, and hope to move forward.

What MVCC does best is not just helping people make sense of what's happening around us, but helping them connect personally with those issues. We bring people together to turn knowledge into action. Together, we've shown what's possible when an entire community believes they have both the right and the responsibility to shape the future of their home.

In Fiscal Year 2026, MVCC continued to facilitate conversations around decisions shaping the valley. We engaged in land use decisions, raised questions about water and growth, worked on climate resilience and clean air, participated in public land

discussions, and advocated for the Methow at the state level.

We also helped people find ways to get involved. Residents came together to learn more about the permitting process. Volunteers documented observations about our forests. Community members learned about drought, water, smoke, and public land management. High school students traveled to Olympia to experience the democratic process first-hand.

This was also a time of change for MVCC. After seven years of leadership, Jasmine Minbashian stepped away from her role as Executive Director. I'm grateful to Jasmine for the foundation she helped build, and to the staff, board, and partners who kept the work moving through the transition.

MVCC has spent decades tackling many of the same questions we face today: How do we grow while preserving what makes our valley special? How do we make sure residents have a meaningful voice in decisions that impact our lives? Even as the circumstances change, these questions endure.

There's no doubt that we're strongest when we work together – when neighbors share what they know, when volunteers lend their time, when people of all ages find their voices, when we work across boundaries, and when our mutual love for the Methow drives hands-on change.

There is plenty of work ahead – I'm grateful to be in it together.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rebekah Phillips'. The signature is fluid and stylized, with a large loop at the end.

Rebekah Phillips
Executive Director



OUR IMPACT:

HEALTHY LAND & WATER

Planning for the Methow's Future

MVCC helped advance a coalition effort to nominate important Methow watershed streams for **Outstanding Resource Waters** designation through the Washington Department of Ecology. Working with the Protect WA Waters Coalition, we helped identify and map proposed stream reaches, gather water quality information, develop nomination materials, and prepare for the coming public process, which will carry into 2027.

Just as importantly, we invested in relationships. MVCC met with Tribal representatives, local governments, conservation organizations, landowners, watershed groups, and public agencies to introduce the proposed nominations, gather feedback, and build understanding before the formal process began. The conversations brought together a remarkably broad range of interests around a shared appreciation for the ecological and community benefits of healthy headwater streams.

MVCC also continued to engage in comprehensive planning and land use decisions, bringing community knowledge and environmental considerations to conversations about growth, water, housing, and community character. We worked to make complicated planning and permitting processes more accessible and raised questions about how development decisions intersect with water availability, flood risk, and long-term community resilience.

To coincide with International Dark Sky Week, MVCC and the Methow Dark Sky Coalition raised awareness about our exceptional night skies through a full week of night hikes, stargazing, educational exhibits, presentations, and interpretive experiences. These events were designed to educate and inspire the community to protect and conserve dark skies as part of our unique ecology and heritage.

CASE STUDY: What happens when the rules that guide growth don't adequately protect the things a community values?

For more than five years, MVCC worked with our partner Futurewise to challenge significant deficiencies in Okanogan County's Comprehensive Plan – the framework that guides land and water use across the county.

The County adopted its current Comprehensive Plan in December, 2021 after a lengthy public process. MVCC and Futurewise participated throughout that process, raising concerns about provisions affecting **water availability, wildlife habitat, critical areas, agriculture, and wildfire safety**. When the plan was adopted without addressing those concerns, we appealed.

Over this last year, MVCC continued working with Futurewise through the courts, where the case had survived multiple procedural challenges. Previous decisions by the Superior Court and the Court of Appeals had affirmed MVCC and Futurewise's standing and interpretation of the timeline for filing the appeal,

allowing the case to proceed toward consideration of the underlying issues.

By the end of FY26, the case was still pending.

The outcome ultimately came after the fiscal year ended, when the Court of Appeals dismissed the appeal on a procedural question related to when the appeal period began.

But the substance of MVCC's concerns remains. **The courts never ruled on the significant deficiencies we identified in the Comprehensive Plan**, including issues related to water availability, wildlife habitat, critical areas, agriculture, and wildfire safety. MVCC is now considering other strategies for addressing those issues.

WHY IT MATTERS: A comprehensive plan can sound abstract, but it shapes decisions that are anything but: where and how communities grow, how water resources are considered, how wildlife habitat and critical areas are protected, and how we prepare for wildfire.

For MVCC, this work is ultimately about a bigger question: How do we grow without losing what makes



the Methow Valley – and Okanogan County – a special place to live? The answer will take persistence, participation, and continued community engagement. Even when one avenue closes, MVCC remains committed to finding ways forward.



OUR IMPACT:

FORESTS & PUBLIC LANDS

Bringing Community Knowledge to Public Lands

In partnership with the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, MVCC's **Citizen Science Forest Monitoring** program gave community volunteers a hands-on role in documenting forest conditions before and after restoration projects for a third consecutive year. Volunteers helped build a better understanding of forest conditions while also observing whether projects are implemented according to their approved prescriptions. This work has become increasingly important as reductions in the U.S. Forest Service workforce have reduced agency capacity for monitoring and oversight.

At the regional level, MVCC participated in the **Great Northwest Forests Coalition**, working to ensure that reforms to the Northwest Forest Plan incorporate climate-smart forest management and meaningful public participation. The plan covers **24.5 million acres of federally managed lands** across the Pacific Northwest.

MVCC also remained engaged in the North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative, the Midnight Restoration Project, and Roadless Rule advocacy. On the Midnight project, MVCC submitted formal comments and an objection while helping the community navigate difficult and, at times, contentious conversations about forest restoration.

A photograph of three deer in a grassy field. One deer is in the foreground on the left, looking right. Another is in the middle ground, looking towards the camera. A third is on the right, looking away. The background shows a hazy mountain range under a soft sky.

OUR IMPACT: WILDLIFE & COEXISTENCE

Making Room for Wildlife

Living alongside wildlife is part of what makes the Methow special – and it also requires practical solutions. In FY26, MVCC worked with residents, agencies, and conservation partners to reduce conflicts between people and wildlife. Through the **Methow Bear Coalition**, we supported a cost-share program for electric fencing that has now helped build 36 fences throughout the valley. We also hosted two bear-spray demonstrations and co-led the interagency **North Cascades Grizzly Recovery Communication & Outreach Coalition**.

Extending beyond bears, MVCC participated in the **Methow Wildlife Area Advisory Group** and continued involvement in **WSDOT's deer-vehicle collision mitigation project**. Wildlife conservation isn't only about protecting animals on the landscape, it's also about giving people practical tools to live safely alongside them and building the relationships needed to address conflicts before they become crises.



OUR IMPACT:

CLEAN AIR & CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Turning Climate Challenges into Community Action

In FY26, our Clean Air Methow program partnered with the Washington Department of Ecology and Okanogan Conservation District to host **four free community chipping events**, processing more than **400 loads of yard waste and woody debris** and giving residents a practical alternative to burn piles. Our robust network of volunteer Clean Air Ambassadors continued to maintain PurpleAir sensors to provide localized air quality information, while MVCC participated in prescribed burning outreach down valley.

With funding from the Department of Ecology for the 2025–2027 biennium, MVCC is able to help households replace older woodstoves with cleaner heating options. Since 2019, the program has supported **95 clean woodstove installations**, with an estimated **four tons of PM2.5 eliminated to date**. In FY26 we began partnering with Cascade Mechanical to offer efficient heat-pump options. Extending this work through education, MVCC produced a new series of social media videos about PM2.5, clean air, and the woodstove program.

Climate resilience also means building the next generation of community leaders, and in FY26 MVCC again organized Liberty Bell's student Climate Club. Bridging grassroots organizing with formal civic literacy, Climate Club prepares students to track state legislation, understand the legislative process, and actively participate in civic dialogue. In January 2026, four students traveled to Olympia, where they **testified before the Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee about wildfire response**.

MVCC also supported Methow Valley projects seeking funding for solar panels, EV charging stations, and battery backup systems, and participated in regional climate advocacy through the Environmental Priorities Coalition.

CASE STUDY: From the Methow to Olympia

For the Liberty Bell High School Climate Club, learning about climate change doesn't stop at the classroom door. After a hiatus, MVCC's Red-Tailed Hawk Fund allowed MVCC to restart the program in 2025, helping students learn how the legislative process works, track bills, participate in town halls, and develop their own stories and perspectives to share with policymakers.

That work culminated in January, when four Climate Club students traveled from the Methow Valley to Olympia with MVCC. There, they met with legislators, learned firsthand how state government works, and testified before the Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee about wildfire response.

The students arrived with a distinctly Methow perspective. Wildfire isn't an abstract policy issue here – it's something students and their families have experienced directly through smoke, evacuations, changing landscapes, and growing concern about the future of their community.

Their visit came during a difficult legislative session, with a tight state budget and significant pressure on



"It felt good to have the opportunity to actually talk to legislators. Instead of sitting around feeling powerless, we got to be part of the conversation." —Climate Club Student

environmental programs. MVCC and the Climate Club advocated for priorities including wildfire preparedness, clean energy, climate funding, and greater transparency around the impacts of data centers.

Not every priority advanced. But advocacy is rarely measured by a single legislative session. Students saw that firsthand: they met with the Methow Valley's 7th District representatives, shared their concerns directly with

decision-makers, and learned that public participation is part of how legislation gains attention and builds momentum over time.

WHY IT MATTERS: The immediate outcome wasn't a new law or a single policy victory. It was four young people experiencing democracy from the inside, discovering that their experiences, questions, and voices have a place in the policymaking process.

HOW WE CREATE CHANGE



What happens next? MVCC doesn't just participate in decisions. We pay attention to what happens afterward and hold decision-makers accountable.

Our impact areas are interconnected, and so is our approach. MVCC works through a cycle of **Educate → Engage → Advocate**.

EDUCATE

We make complex issues understandable.

Land use regulations, water policy, forest management, climate science, air quality, and state legislation can be difficult to navigate. We translate these issues into information that community members can understand and use, from workshops and newsletters to action alerts, public events, and direct conversations.

ENGAGE

We create opportunities for people to participate.

We bring residents into the process through public meetings, volunteer programs, surveys, community events, youth programs, citizen science, and direct engagement with decision-makers. We believe people are more likely to become effective stewards of their community when they have meaningful opportunities to contribute.

ADVOCATE

We turn community knowledge into action.

MVCC brings the community's perspective to county, state, and federal decision-making. We submit comments, participate in planning processes, work with agencies and elected officials, and advocate for policies that protect the region's land, water, climate, air, and communities.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Financial summary for April 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026.*

ASSETS

Cash and cash equivalents	227,607
Accounts receivable	(1,266)
Property and equipment	185,606

Total assets **\$411,947**

LIABILITIES

Accounts payable	485
Accrued payroll	2,839
Long-term debt (EIDL loan)	48,961

Total liabilities **\$52,285**

NET ASSETS

Without donor restrictions	291,898
With donor restrictions	67,764

Total net assets **\$359,662**

Total liabilities and net assets **\$411,947**

REVENUE

Contributions	
Without donor restrictions	589,542
With donor restrictions	15,000
Reimbursements	250
Investment and interest income	2,763

Total operating revenue **\$607,555**

EXPENSES

Program services	378,327
Management and general	154,854
Fundraising	37,306

Total expenses **\$570,487**

CHANGE IN NET ASSETS **\$37,068**

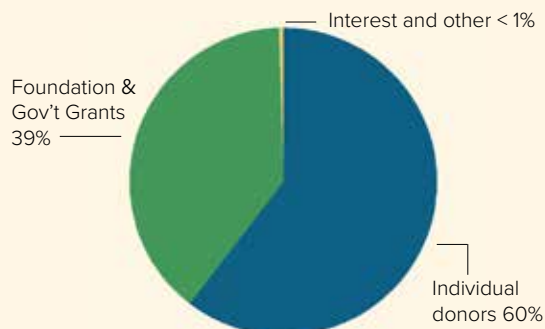
NET ASSETS

Beginning of year **\$322,594**

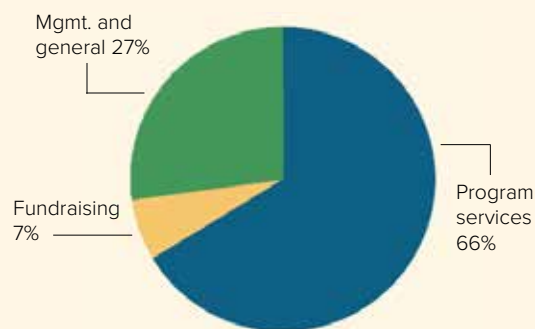
End of year **\$359,662**



REVENUE — \$607,555



EXPENSES — \$570,487



*The financial information presented is based on MVCC's financial records and the organization's filed Form 990. These statements were approved and adopted by the MVCC Board of Directors. They have not been audited or reviewed by an independent certified public accountant.



FY2026

PERSONNEL

Board of Directors

Easton Branam, *Secretary*
Catherine Hennings, *Vice Chair*
Mira Hirsch, *Junior Board Member*
Tom Jones, *Chair*
Douglas Marconi Jr.
Marit Nelson, *Junior Board Member*
Kiana Sam
John Sirois
Murray Taylor, *Treasurer*

Maggie Coon, *Board Chair Emerita*

Staff

Dana Golden, *Resilient Methow
Program Manager*
Madelyn Hamilton, *Wildlife & Public
Lands Manager*
Nicholas Littman, *Communications
Manager*
Nancy McKinney Milsteadt,
Accounting Manager
Jasmine Minbashian, *Executive
Director*
Lorah Super, *Program Director*
Gwen Vernon, *Major Gifts Manager*
Mary Yglesia, *Operations Manager/
Interim Executive Director*

Program Partners

MVCC works alongside local nonprofits, businesses, public agencies, and other partners to combine expertise, resources, and local knowledge, allowing us to accomplish more together than is possible to do alone.

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Conservation Northwest
Defenders of Wildlife
Department of Ecology
Environmental Priorities Coalition
Goats Beard Mt. Supply
Great NW Forest Plan Campaign
Coalition
Home Range Wildlife Research
Liberty Bell High School
Methow Recycles
Methow Valley Trails Collaborative
MZ Solar Consulting
National Park Service
National Parks Conservation
Association
North Central WA Forest Health
Collaborative
Okanogan Conservation District

Okanogan Regional Airshed
Partnership
Okanagan Nation Alliance
Sierra Club
The Wilderness Society
Town of Twisp
Town of Winthrop
University of Michigan
US Fish & Wildlife Service
US Forest Service
WA Department of Fish & Wildlife
WA Department of Transportation
WA Wild
Washington Department of
Commerce
Waste Wise Methow
Western Washington Sustainability
Pathways

LOOKING AHEAD

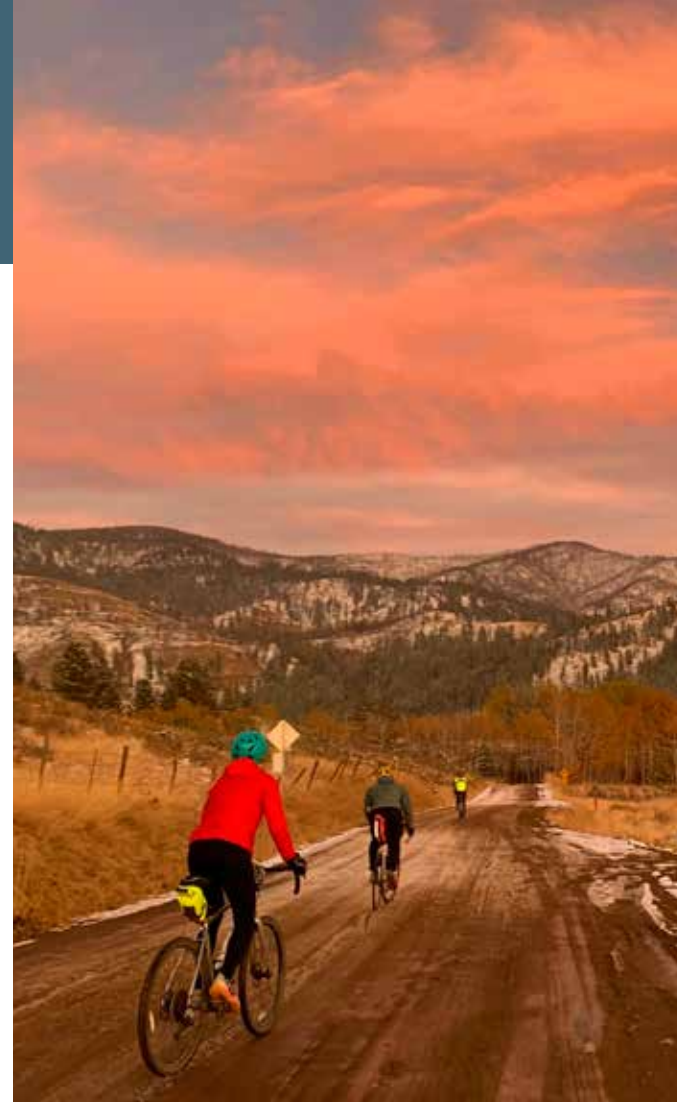
The challenges facing the Methow Valley and Okanogan County aren't getting any simpler. At the same time, the last fiscal year reminded us of a critical truth: **we're not facing these challenges alone.**

For millennia, the Methow people have lived in relationship with and cared for this place. That history, presence, knowledge, and ongoing connection to the land are an essential part of understanding what it means to protect the Methow Valley today. As we look ahead, MVCC is committed to strengthening our relationships with Tribal partners and to listening to and incorporating Tribal priorities as we develop our advocacy agenda and approach the decisions that will shape this region's future.

In the coming years, MVCC will build on its foundation of advocacy and community engagement by deepening relationships across our bioregion, creating more ways for people to participate, and helping to bring local knowledge, Tribal perspectives, and community priorities to the decisions that shape our future.

We'll also be more intentional about communicating our impact. The work of an organization like MVCC is not always measured in laws passed or battles won. Sometimes it looks like a person submitting their first public comment, smoke-sensitive residents having a network of PurpleAir sensors to rely on, a neighbor choosing a cleaner heating system, a community coming together around the protection of its watershed, or relationships with Tribal partners growing stronger through shared work.

These moments add up. They build knowledge, relationships, confidence, and the capacity to act. They also remind us that caring for this place is not new, and that the work of protecting its future is stronger when it is grounded in relationship – with one another, with our partners, and with the land itself.





None of this happens without *you*. Thank you.

Methow Valley Citizens Council
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Twisp, WA 98856
mvcitizens.org | EIN 91-1061350